



PRESS RELEASE
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For Immediate Release

January 9, 2004

TWO DEFENDANTS CONVICTED IN MARIJUANA CONSPIRACY

Tampa, Florida - On January 8, 2004, a jury in U.S. District Court in Tampa, Florida, found Enrique Balderas, age 25, and Israel Gomez, age 26, guilty of conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute over 100 kilograms of marijuana. Israel Gomez was also convicted of possession with intent to distribute over 100 kilograms of marijuana. Balderas and Gomez were indicted on March 25, 2003. The maximum penalty Balderas and Gomez face is forty years' imprisonment and a \$2,000,000 fine. The sentencing hearing is scheduled for April 30, 2004.

According to testimony presented at trial, Balderas and Gomez were arrested on October 1, 2002, in connection with the seizure of 1,522 pounds of marijuana with a street value of over \$2,000,000 stored in a residence in Ruskin, Florida. Balderas and Gomez were stopped by detectives of the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office after leaving the residence. Evidence seized at the residence and other evidence linked both Balderas and Gomez to the marijuana and the drug trafficking conspiracy.

The case was investigated by the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office with the assistance of the Drug Enforcement Administration. The case was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney W. Stephen Muldrow.